

Life is Living Festival

Event: 15th Annual Life is Living Festival

Location: Lil Bobby Hutton Park, West Oakland

Date/Time: October 8, 10 AM - 6 PM

Number of people reached: 36 (31 in-person, 5 online interviews)

Event Description:



Source: The Village

The Deeply Rooted in Oakland Partnership conducted English outreach at the Life is Living Festival in West Oakland. The festival was organized by Youth Speaks and had music, dancing, food vendors, mural making, open instruments, and other community organizations tabling. The event welcomed all residents, with an emphasis on celebrating Black and Brown artists and cultural workers. The Village in Oakland team facilitated giveaways, discussions, and care packages for unhoused persons.

The team informed people what the General Plan is; conducted 36 in-person and online interviews; shared a 2-pager on housing and environmental justice conditions that people in Oakland are experiencing; handed out flyers for resources for Emergency Rapid Assistance Program (ERAP), library, and maintenance; referred community members to direct service organizations or City Department to address current needs; and gathered questions regarding the General Plan and City services. The 2-pager on housing and environmental justice conditions presented racial displacement, housing affordability, pollution burden, past and future housing production in Oakland, and a call to action.

Engagement Approaches:

1) Approach people to have a conversation rather than extracting information 2) A 2-pager on housing and environmental justice on the table in English 3) Giveaways including free posters and stickers for survey respondents 4) care packages for unhoused persons

Demographics: The Deeply Rooted in Oakland Partnership is committed to reaching people who have not traditionally been part of planning processes. At this event we spoke with youth, older adults, formerly incarcerated persons, unhoused persons, tenants/renters, homeowners, people with disabilities, LGBTQ+ people, low-income persons, and persons experiencing environmental injustice. The following are demographic highlights based on the 36 interviews we conducted:

- **Race/Ethnicity:** Majority of the people we spoke to are Black/African American (39%). *See Table 1 for more information.*
- **Age:** Most of the people we spoke to are between the ages of 35-44 (44%). *See Table 2 for more information.*
- **Gender:** 63% are female, 28% are male, 8% are non-binary, and 3% are two-spirit. *See Table 3 below for more information.*
- **Housing:** Majority are renters (67%). *See Table 4 for more information.*
- **Disability:** 33% shared having a disability; having a mobility impairment (3%), a mental health disorder (13%), sensory impairment (3%), a learning disability (5%), or other disability (10%). *See Table 5 below for more information.*
- **Annual Personal Income:** Majority of the people we spoke with have an annual personal income of over \$50,000. *See Table 6 below for more information.*
- **Sexual Orientation:** 51% are heterosexual and 32% are LGBTQ+. *See Table 7 below for more information.*
- **Experience with Mass Incarceration:** 43% of respondents shared having some experience with mass incarceration; being a family member of someone who is formerly incarcerated (30%), a family member of someone who is currently incarcerated (8%) or formerly incarcerated themselves (5%). *See Table 8 below for more information.*

The 36 interviews included the following 8 questions and demographic information:

- **General:** 1) When did you/your family arrive in Oakland? Where were you living before?; 2) What neighborhoods have you lived in?; and 3) What's your favorite memory of Oakland?

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- **Housing:** 1) Have your family members struggled with housing problems? If so, what have been your major problems?; and 2) What are your ideas for solutions? What would you like to see as solutions?
- **Environmental Health:** 1) Do any of your Oakland family members have trouble breathing, been involved in a car collision, been affected by wildfires (proximity or smoke), or flooding?; and 2) What are your ideas for solutions? What would you like to see as solutions?
- **Anything else you would like to share?**
- **Demographic Information:** Zip code, neighborhoods, age, race/ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, housing, disability, annual income, and formerly incarcerated

Engagement Summary

The following is a summary of the main points that community members brought up during the event. Points under each topic are ordered by most to least mentioned.

FAMILY ARRIVED IN OAKLAND

- A majority of individuals we spoke to shared that their families arrived between 2000-2010 (28%) and 2011-2020 (25%). *See Table 9 below for more information.*
- Most people had previously been living in the Bay Area (32%). Bay Area locations included: San Francisco, Berkeley, and Fremont.

A FAVORITE MEMORY OF OAKLAND

“The people you meet randomly”
“It’s Oakland. I loved growing up in Oakland.”

- **Culture and Cultural Arts:**
 - People expressed their appreciation for community events and festivals that bring people together like Malcolm X Festival, Juneteenth, Pride, First Fridays, Black Cowboy Parade, Black Joy Parade, Life is Living, Bicycle parties, and Festival at the Lake.
 - People identified the Cultural Explosion in the late 80s, Fox Theatre, and the thriving music scene.
- **Oakland Locals and Community:**
 - People highlighted the history and present state of activism and community organizing, such as the May Day marches and 3rd World 4 Black Power. Many stated themes of collaboration and collective efforts.

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- One individual mentioned walking through homeless encampments sharing food with the unhoused.
- A few individuals reminisced on Oakland's past culture, stating people used to be able to go from place to next.
- Many stated their pride for Oakland while stating the need for more conversations and community engagement.
- **Nature and Parks:** Lake Merritt, MLK Waterway Regional Shoreline, Diamond Park
- **Youth and Schools:**
 - Individuals spoke on growing up in Oakland, going to school, visiting Fairyland, exploring with friends, and community organizing with other youth.
 - Those with families identified the importance of raising their children in community-oriented schools and having accessible parks and childrens' places.

HOUSING

"There's lots of 'affordable' housing being built, but affordable to who?"

HOUSING AFFORDABILITY

- **Issues:**
 - High cost of rent and rising costs met with lack of livable wages
 - Landlords buy residents out and replace buildings with more expensive apartment units
 - High apartment prices all across the Bay Area, resulting in long commute hours and continued displacement
 - Rapidly rising rent costs with little advance notice
- **Solutions:**
 - Expand rent control and lowering rent based on income
 - Prioritize affordable housing for low-income, unhoused, and system impacted people
 - Utilize vacant homes and properties
 - Center Oakland locals and multi-generational residents
 - Designate higher percentage of new developments for affordable housing
 - Support public housing development near public transit
 - Develop landlord/tenant meditation programs
 - Center an equitable Section 8 system and remove lottery system
 - Create affordable housing for educators and nonprofit employees

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- Create affordable housing for groups such as healers and artists
- Create cooperative housing for BIPOC residents with green spaces and outdoor living space
- Create Oakland Rent Stabilization Board, similar to Berkeley, to help tenants understand their rights and advocacy options
- Support Community Block Grants for low income housing repairs and restoration

HOUSING HABITABILITY

- **Issues:**
 - Ill-maintained buildings containing mold with inadequate landlord action
 - Residents sacrifice space for cost, resulting in little space for family growth
 - No access to laundry facilities in apartment complex or in surrounding area
- **Solutions:**
 - Strengthen health code enforcement
 - Provide assistance to home repair costs for family owned homes

HOMELESSNESS

- **Solutions:**
 - Repurpose vacant buildings, hotels & motels for unhoused communities and individuals
 - Prioritize building and developing permanent housing, not just transitional
 - Increase hostels for unhoused residents and those living in their vehicles
 - Create priority housing for unhoused residents facing mental health issues

HOMEOWNERSHIP

- **Issue:**
 - No affordable pathway to homeownership
- **Solutions:**
 - Increase education for first time homebuyers and investors
 - Support community ownership structure with housing owned and maintained by Oaklanders
 - Support affordable rehabbed homes
 - Increase homeownership grants and financial support

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

“Way more green space, places of healing.

Sheltered from excessive air pollution and noise pollution.”

INDUSTRIAL & INDUSTRIAL LANDS

- **Issues:**
 - Industrial air pollution create respiratory illnesses, especially in West Oakland and neighborhoods close to industries
 - Other health conditions such as eczema and allergies are exacerbated by pollution proximity
 - Inaccessible, unhealthy, and unsafe areas for cyclists
- **Solutions:**
 - Plant trees and expand green spaces in neighborhoods impacted by air pollution from freeways
 - Prioritize environmental justice neighborhoods like West Oakland
 - Expand enforcement on company polluters such as Port of Oakland, trucking, and shipping industries (ex: no-idling laws and enforcing clean air practices)
 - Consider cap and limit on development projects
 - Support reconciliation with pollution-impacted residents (ex: factories pay nearby communities annual cost)
 - Increase air pollution monitoring efforts
 - Eliminate all coal usage

WILDFIRES

- **Issues:**
 - Wildfires exacerbate respiratory issues and health conditions
 - Smoke forces Oaklanders to stay inside or seek shelter
- **Solution:**
 - Provide assistance and resources to residents during fire season, such as air purifiers

CARS & COLLISIONS

- **Issues:**
 - Traffic create a pollution burden in neighborhooding communities, raising equity issues
 - Highway 880 with trucks amplify pollution exposure
 - Frequent hit and runs with bikes and scooters on more crowded streets

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- Ill-maintained roads especially in low-income communities
- **Solutions:**
 - Priorities bike lanes, speed bumps, and other street safety design
 - Consider trade-in programs for affordable electric cars
 - Expand incentives for car-sharing and carpooling
 - Invest in clean mass transit
 - Improve road quality and prioritize fixing potholes
 - Support bicycling access from Downtown Oakland to Eastside
 - Consider enforcement and reducing speed limit of International Ave and buses

NATURE & GREEN SPACES

- **Solutions:**
 - Prioritize green spaces that serve as community healing spaces
 - Increase focus on cleaning waterways

TRASH & ILLEGAL DUMPING

- **Solutions:**
 - Increasing well-paying jobs for neighborhood clean up, do not depend on volunteer efforts
 - Improve enforcement for illegal dumping and blight violations

FOOD ACCESS

- **Solutions:**
 - Support community gardens and wild spaces
 - Perform soil testing to support safe and homegrown food
 - Implement healthy free food drives for families and low-income residents

ECONOMIC, SCHOOL AND EDUCATION, HEALTHCARE, DRUGS, AND CITY ACCOUNTABILITY

"I love living in Oakland but it's hard"

ECONOMIC

- **Issue:**
 - Lack of basic living wage
- **Solutions:**
 - Revitalize public spaces with community-run businesses
 - Consider Universal Basic Income
 - Support Black businesses and accessible loan programs

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- Expand technical assistance for generational equity and wealth transfer

HEALTH & HEALTHCARE

- **Issues:**

- Unstable and unaffordable housing creates adverse health and mental health impacts
- Inaccessible and unaffordable healthcare

- **Solutions:**

- Prioritize illness prevention practices as well as treatment
- Improve accessibility dental services
- Support reintegration programs for mental health, including housing avenues

SCHOOLS & EDUCATION

- **Solutions:**

- Stop school closures
- Support community education centers such as HOMIES Empowerment Learning Center
- Prioritize education funding

DRUGS

- **Issue:**

- Drugs on the street and addiction impacting communities

- **Solution:**

- Prioritize drug prevention and treatment initiatives

VIOLENCE

- **Issue:**

- Gun violence impacting safety and mental health of communities

CITY ACCOUNTABILITY

- **Issue:**

- City planning information is inaccessible

- **Solution:**

- Improve communication related to the General Plan and city plans

DEMOGRAPHIC DATA ANALYSIS

Note: The tables listed below do not include a total count because respondents can select more than one response for subsections – Race/Ethnicity, Gender, Housing, Disability, Sexual Orientation, and Experience with Mass Incarceration.

Table 1. Engagement by Race/Ethnicity

Race/Ethnicity	Number of People	Distribution (%)
Black/African American	17	38.6%
Hispanic or Latino (non white or Black)	5	11.4%
White/European	9	20.5%
Native American/Indigenous or Alaska Native	1	2.3%
Asian	6	13.6%
Multi-racial	1	2.3%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0	0.0%
Caribbean Islander	1	2.3%
Middle Eastern	2	4.6%
Other	0	0.0%
Decline to state	1	2.3%

Table 2. Engagement by Age

Age	Number of People	Distribution (%)
12-17	1	2.8%
18-24	1	2.8%
25-34	4	11.1%
35-44	16	44.4%

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45-54	5	13.9%
55-64	3	8.3%
65+	0	0.0%
Decline to state	6	16.7%
Total	36	

Table 3. Engagement by Gender

Gender	Number of People	Distribution (%)
Female	24	63.2%
Male	9	23.7%
Non-binary	3	7.9%
Two-Spirit	1	2.6%
Transgender	0	0.0%
Intersex	0	0.0%
Decline to state	1	2.6%

Table 4. Engagement by Housing

Housing	Number of People	Distribution (%)
Rent	24	66.7%
Own	6	16.7%
Shared housing with family/roommates/partner	5	13.9%
Temporary with friends/family	1	2.8%
Mobile housing/unhoused	0	0.0%
Temporary (in shelter, hotel)	0	0.0%
Decline to state	0	0.0%

Table 5. Engagement by Disability

Disability	Number of People	Distribution (%)
A mobility impairment	1	2.6%
A mental health disorder	5	12.8%
A sensory impairment (vision or hearing)	1	2.6%
A learning disability (e.g., ADHD, dyslexia)	2	5.1%
Other	4	10.3%
Decline to state	8	20.5%
None	18	46.2%

Table 6. Engagement by Annual Personal Income

Annual Personal Income	Number of People	Distribution (%)
\$0-\$10,000	4	11.1%
\$10,001-\$20,000	2	5.6%
\$20,001-\$30,000	4	11.1%
\$30,001-\$40,000	4	11.1%
\$40,001-\$50,000	3	8.3%
\$50,001+	13	36.1%
Decline to state	6	16.7%
Total	36	

Table 7. Engagement by Sexual Orientation

Sexual Orientation	Number of People	Distribution (%)
Heterosexual	19	51.4%
Queer	6	16.2%
Bisexual	5	13.5%
Lesbian	0	0.0%

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Gay	1	2.7%
Decline to state	6	16.2%

Table 8. Engagement by Experience with Mass Incarceration

Mass Incarceration	Number of People	Distribution (%)
I am a family member of someone who is formerly incarcerated	11	29.7%
I am formerly incarcerated	2	5.4%
I am a family member of someone who is currently incarcerated	3	8.1%
None	17	45.9%
Decline to state	4	10.8%

Table 9. Family Arrived in Oakland

Arrive in Oakland	Number of People	Distribution (%)
Before 1900	0	0.0%
1900-1950	1	2.8%
1950-1979	5	13.9%
1980-1999	8	22.2%
2000-2010	10	27.8%
2011-2020	9	25.0%
2021+	0	0.0%
Visiting	0	0.0%
Working	0	0.0%
Other	2	5.6%
Decline to state	1	2.8%
Total	36	